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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003142

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER AGREES TO JOINT COMMISSION ON
PERSONAL SECURITY DETAIL OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

REF: BAGHDAD 03136

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Patricia A. Butenis for reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d)

CONFIDENTIAL

Summary

(C) 1. Late on September 18, Prime Minister al-Maliki approved the establishment of a joint USG-GOI commission of inquiry to examine issues of security and safety related to USG-affiliated personal security detail operations in Iraq. The Charge d'affaires reached agreement with NSA Rubbaie (in consultation with PM COS Tariq Abdullah) on the parameters of the commission after we agreed, in consultation with Washington, to add a reference to CPA Order 17 (revised). The GOI promptly made public the agreement. The announcement of a joint commission in the wake of the September 16 incident in the Mansour district of Baghdad involving a DOS personal security detail and resulting in the loss of life will go a long way toward soothing political tensions with the GOI and addressing public anger over the incident. Nonetheless, the Prime Minister strongly advised that the Embassy continue to stand down on PSD movements for the next 48 hours, which the Charge has agreed to do. RSO continued the internal investigation today, conducting interviews with Iraqi witnesses of the incident with the assistance of MNF.

Status of the Investigation

(C) 2. The Regional Security Officer sent six investigators to the Mansour Police Station today to interview 14 Iraqi witnesses, including National Police Officers, Iraqi Army, and civilians, as facilitated by MNF-I. RSO is evaluating the interview results and expects that additional interviews and possibly re-interviews will be necessary. The investigation is ongoing and details will be reported through DS channels.

Charge Meeting with National Security Advisor Rubaie

(C) 3. To follow up on yesterdays meeting, the Charge d'Affaires, Regional Security Officer, Embassy Legal Advisor, and MNF-I representative met today with NSA Rubaie. Rubaie said that the Secretary's call to the Prime Minister the previous evening was very helpful and very much appreciated. He also praised his working relationship with the Embassy and said that thanks to his meeting with the Charge the day before, he had been able to brief the PM before his phone

call with the Secretary, and that the PM was less agitated when they spoke. The Charge gave Rubaie cleared draft language proposing a Joint USG-GOI Commission of Inquiry on issues of safety and security related to USG-affiliated Personnel Security Detail operations, per the previous day,s meeting and the Secretary and PM,s discussion (final text provided to S/I and L). Rubaie quickly expressed his agreement with the proposal, but asked that language be added including a review of CPA order number 17, the order which (among other things) grants immunity to contractors working for the USG in Iraq. He also suggested that the GOI appoint seven military, police and MOI officials as the GOI commission representatives, to include the MOD as the Iraqi co-chair. (After meeting the PM, Rubbaie clarified that the GOI would name eight representatives.)

(C) 4. Rubaie also noted that both the Embassy,s and the GOI,s reactions had been measured and appropriate, and that more recent GOI press statements had been less heated than initial reactions. The Charge mentioned two parties whose statements had been unhelpful: statements attributed in the press to Minister of Interior Bolani indicating that action to ban Blackwater from Iraq was imminent, and strong statements made by Blackwater representatives in defense of its employees' actions. The Charge said the USG had asked Blackwater to withhold statements while the investigation was ongoing and that it would be appreciated if the MOI would also withhold statements during this period.

(C) 5. Rubaie said that after his meeting with the Charge and the PM,s call with the Secretary, he had spoken with Bolani and explained that Blackwater,s license cannot be revoked because its personnel are not under GOI jurisdiction but rather are governed by CPA 17. Rubbaie stressed that the MOI

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should not speak out on the issue while the investigation is ongoing. Rubaie said he thought Bolani "understood most of it."

The Charge told Rubaie that PSD moves outside of the IZ were on hold pending clarity on the GOI,s statements that Blackwater could no longer operate in Iraq. Rubaie said that he would meet with the PM that night to seek the PM's approval of the draft language on the Joint Commission and on Blackwater recommencing operations.

Meeting with PM Chief of Staff

(C) 6. The Charge also met with Tariq Abdullah, the PM's Chief of Staff, to brief him and advise that we hoped we would have the PM's decisions on the Joint Commission and Blackwater operations quickly. Dr. Tariq agreed he would coordinate with NSA Rubbaie, and ensure the Prime Minister reviewed the issue quickly.

PM's Reaction

(C) 7. NSA Rubbaie, in the presence of COS Abdullah, called the Charge to confirm that the Prime Minister had approved the establishment of the joint commission and confirmed the GOI would provide us the names of eight participants. The Prime Minister however believed that public anger over the incident merited a continued hold on Blackwater movements outside the IZ and strongly advised the Embassy to stand down on movements for the next 48 hours. The Charge confirmed that the Embassy would extend its hold on PSD movements beyond the IZ. Dr. Rubbaie and the Prime Minister,s office agreed that both the GOI and USG should make public the agreement this evening.

MEDIA ANALYSIS

(C) 8. Iraqi and Pan-Arabic coverage of the incident in Mansour increased markedly today in comparison to yesterday. The local media seemed to be taking a cue from the Western media,s intensive coverage of the issue and many print and web based sources quoted Western new agencies for their information. Most of the coverage tended to focus on differing accounts of the incident and body counts. There was little in the way of commentary, although that is expected to change in the coming days. While GOI Spokesman Dabbagh,s comments did receive some coverage, the Iraqi media tended to focus more on quotes regarding the MOI,s decision to revoke Blackwater,s license and a statement by Muqtada al-Sadr blaming the government for the security failure and calling for the expulsion of &all foreign criminal and intelligence firms.⁸ Al Araqiya tonight broadcast news of a U.S.-Iraqi Joint Commission to look into the events. It also held a thirty minute news segment carrying reactions from different government ministers and including the Embassy spokesperson as a participant.

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